

## CHAPTER 2

# TRAFFIC LAWS



Idaho’s traffic laws and safe driving practices are the “Rules of the Road” that allow the safe and orderly movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. They affect many driving activities, such as stopping, driving speed, yielding the right of way, passing other vehicles, and parking.

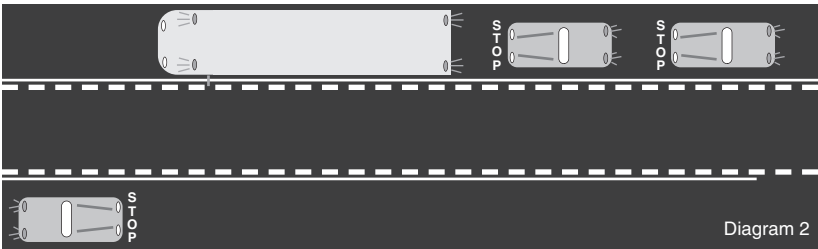
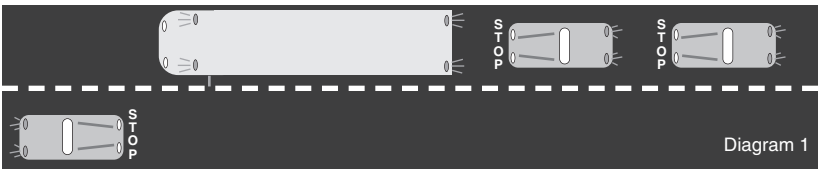
### Stopping

Idaho law requires you to:

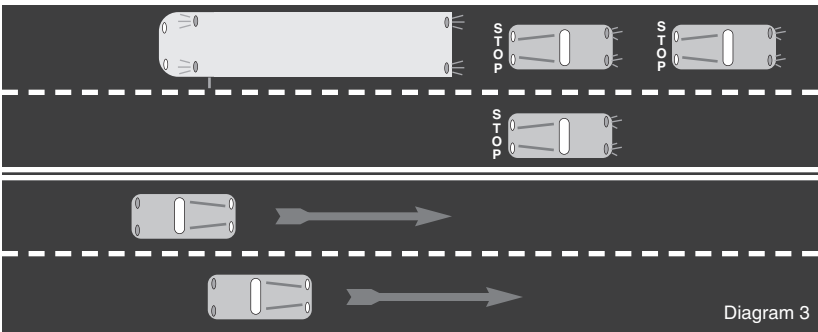
- **STOP** before the stop line or crosswalk at any intersection posted with a stop sign. If there is no stop line or crosswalk, stop before entering the intersection, but close enough to see cross traffic.
- **STOP** for any flashing red signal. It is the same as a stop sign.
- **STOP** for any steady red traffic light and remain stopped behind the stop line. If there is no stop line, stop before entering the crosswalk. You may turn right after stopping and yielding to cross traffic except where posted otherwise. Similarly, when turning left into a one-way street, you may turn after stopping and yielding to cross traffic except where posted otherwise. In all other cases, wait until the light turns green before proceeding. When a green arrow is shown along with a steady red light, you may proceed only in the direction of the green arrow.
- **STOP** or slow down at an intersection when necessary to yield right-of-way to a pedestrian crossing within a marked or unmarked crosswalk.
- **STOP** at a railway crossing when a train is coming or when wigwag or flashing signals, gates, or a watchman indicates the approach of a train.

- **STOP** when entering a street from an alley, building, driveway, or private road. Stop before crossing the sidewalk and yield to pedestrians and traffic.
- **STOP** upon the request of any police officer.
- **STOP** for emergency or police vehicles sounding a siren or flashing red or blue lights. Pull over to the nearest edge of the road where it is legal to park and remain stopped until the emergency vehicle has passed or the police officer has indicated you may proceed.
- **STOP** for a school bus that is loading or unloading students. On a two-lane road, both following and oncoming traffic must stop and remain stopped as long as the red lights near the top of the bus are

**You must stop** when approaching a school bus that is displaying flashing red lights while stopped to pick up or drop off children. You must remain stopped until all children are clear of the roadway and the bus moves again. (Diagrams 1 and 2)



You do not have to stop if you are traveling in the opposite direction on roadways with **four or more lanes** if two lanes are going in each direction. (Diagram 3)

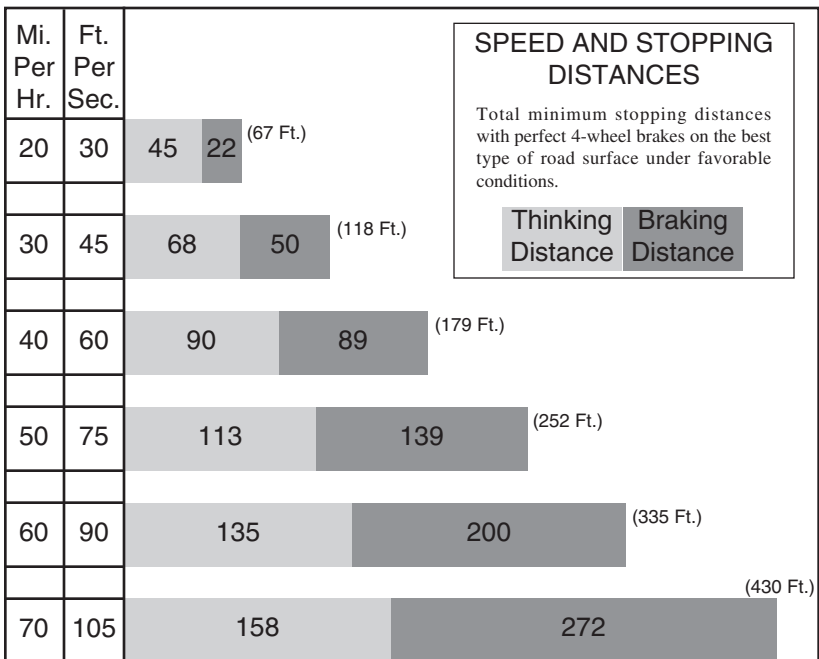


flashing and/or the stop arm on the left side of the bus is extended. On a highway with two or more lanes going each direction, oncoming traffic is not required to stop when meeting a school bus.

- **STOP** when you are involved in an accident.

**Stop signals:** When slowing down or stopping, you must give a signal to other drivers. You may use either an arm signal or the brake-operated signal lights on the rear of your vehicle.

**Speed:** The speed that you are traveling determines how much time you have to react and how long it takes you to stop.



Driving too fast is a major cause of motor vehicle accidents. When combined with other violations, mechanical failure, or errors in judgment, speeding often leads to disaster.

**Basic Rule**

No matter what the posted speed limit, you must judge the situation and slow down when necessary for safety.

- **Idaho’s “basic rule” law:** Idaho law has a basic rule requiring you to drive at a speed that is “reasonable and prudent” at all times. This applies to all streets and highways where maximum speed limits are set by law or posted. Whenever you are driving, you need to think about how your speed affects other traffic (including pedestrians and bicycle riders). You also need to think about the road surface (the presence of ice, snow, rain, or rough pavement), hazards at intersections, visibility, oncoming traffic, curves, and any other conditions that may affect safety. If you drive too fast for existing conditions—even if you are driving under the posted speed limit—you are violating the “basic rule” law.
- **Posted speed limits:** State and local authorities may adjust speeds by posting speed limit signs. It is your responsibility to observe the signs and obey the speed limits.
- **Maximum speeds:** The “maximum” speed limit for passenger vehicles is 75 miles per hour on interstate highways (65 miles per hour for heavy commercial vehicles), 65 miles per hour on state highways, and 35 miles per hour on city streets. Local authorities may set even lower speed limits in residential, urban, or business districts, so remember to observe the “posted” speed limit at all times.
- **Minimum speeds:** It is illegal to drive so slowly that you disrupt the normal flow of traffic.
- **School zones:** Observe posted speed limits in school zones.
- **Construction zones:** Observe posted speed limits in designated danger zones. Violating a construction zone speed limit can result in an enhanced, fixed penalty of \$50.

## Right-of-Way and Yielding

Idaho law defines when a vehicle or pedestrian must yield the right-of-way, letting another vehicle or pedestrian pass through an intersection first. Always remember that right-of-way is something to be given, not taken.

## Pedestrians and Right of Way

Motor vehicles must yield to pedestrians when:

- The pedestrian is in a marked or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection.
- The vehicle is entering a street from an alley or driveway.
- The pedestrian is a blind person walking with a white cane or seeing eye dog.

Pedestrians must yield to motor vehicles when:

- The pedestrian is crossing a street where there is no crosswalk or intersection.
- Directed to do so by a traffic signal at an intersection or crosswalk.

## **Yielding to Other Drivers**

You must yield to other drivers:

- When directed to do so by a yield sign. As you approach a yield sign, always slow down and be prepared to stop.
- When entering a street from an alley, driveway, or garage after stopping.
- When approached by an emergency or police vehicle sounding a siren and/or flashing red or blue lights.
- When told to do so by a police officer directing traffic. An officer's directions always over-rule signs and signals.
- After stopping for a stop sign at a two-way stop, yield to cross traffic.
- At four-way stops. The first vehicle to arrive at a four-way stop has the right of way. If two vehicles arrive at the same time, the vehicle on the left must yield to the vehicle on the right.
- At an unmarked or uncontrolled intersection (no signs or signals). If two vehicles arrive at the same time, the vehicle on the left must yield to the vehicle on the right.
- At an unmarked or uncontrolled three-way "T" intersection, where you will have to turn either right or left. You must stop and/or yield to any drivers approaching from the other two directions.
- When making a left turn. Always yield to oncoming traffic unless directed otherwise by a traffic-control device.
- In construction zones. Yield to all vehicles or pedestrians working on a highway construction project.

## **Keep to the Right**

In most cases, the law requires that we stay as far to the right side of the road as possible. The exceptions are:

- When preparing to make a left turn.
- When passing another vehicle going in the same direction.
- When on a highway with more than two lanes where the right lane is designated for slow traffic.
- When entering the left lane temporarily in order to avoid an obstruction, a pedestrian, or an animal.
- When traveling on a road restricted to one-way traffic.
- When traveling on a road with two or more lanes traveling in the same direction.

## **Passing**

Passing and being passed are normal parts of driving, but can increase the chances of an accident. Idaho's mountains and winding river canyons make passing risky on many two-lane highways.

If you must pass, do so only when you won't interfere with oncoming traffic or the vehicle you're passing. Wait until you're certain you have enough time to pass safely. Before returning to your own lane, signal and wait until you can see the vehicle you're passing in your rear-view mirror.

If you start to pass, but decide you can't make it, pull back and wait for another opening. "No Passing" signs and pavement markings can tell you where passing is prohibited or unsafe, but only you can tell when it is safe.

Passing is prohibited when you are in or approaching the following areas:

- Hills, curves or other obstructions on two-lane roads that prevent you from seeing oncoming vehicles that might pose a hazard.
- Within 100 feet of an intersection, unless otherwise indicated by traffic-control devices.
- Within 100 feet of a railroad crossing, unless otherwise indicated by traffic-control devices.
- Within 100 feet of a bridge or tunnel when the view is obstructed.
- When a school bus is stopped to load or unload passengers.
- When a vehicle ahead of you has stopped at a marked or unmarked crosswalk to let a pedestrian cross.
- When you must go off the pavement or roadway to pass.

## **Passing on the Right**

Passing on the right is prohibited except:

- When the vehicle you're overtaking on a two-lane, two-way road is turning left.
- On a one-way or multi-lane street with two or more lanes going your direction.

## **When Passing Other Vehicles**

- Check your mirrors and blind spots—someone else may be trying to pass you. Turn on your left turn signal, then move into the left lane.
- Wait until you have passed the vehicle and can see it in your rear-view mirror before turning on your right turn signal and moving back into the right lane.
- If the vehicle you're passing begins to drift toward you, use your horn.
- You must complete a pass before coming within 200 feet of oncoming traffic.
- You should complete a pass before you reach a "No Passing" zone marked with signs or pavement markings.
- It is illegal to exceed the speed limit when passing.

## When Being Passed

- Help other drivers pass you safely. Move to the right side of your lane to give them more room and a better view of the road ahead.
- Don't speed up. Maintain a steady speed or slow down.
- Watch for trouble. If the other driver miscalculates, your quick reaction can reduce the chances of being involved in an accident.

## Slow-Moving Vehicles

Any vehicle traveling so slowly that it is delaying three or more other vehicles in a rural area or on a two-lane highway must turn off the road wherever safe to let the other vehicles pass.

Slow-moving vehicles designed to travel no faster than 25 mph may travel on public highways during daylight hours only (30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset), except for snow removal and farm equipment operated on non-interstate highways and equipped with flashing lights visible for 500 feet. All slow-moving vehicles must have a foot brake, turn signals, and must display the approved emblem for slow-moving vehicles.

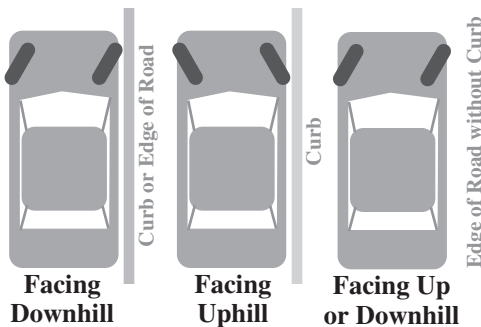
## Parking

When parking on a public road, you must park parallel to and within 18 inches of the curb or edge of the roadway, facing in the same direction as traffic on your side of the road.

When you leave your car, secure it. Set the parking brake and, if you have an automatic transmission, shift to park; if you have a manual transmission, leave the car in gear. Remove the keys and lock the door.

## Parking on a Hill

To keep your vehicle from rolling into traffic when parked on a hill, turn your front wheels (1) sharply toward and against the curb or edge of the road if you are facing downhill, or (2) if you are facing uphill, turn your wheels sharply away and against the curb (if there is no curb, turn the wheels sharply toward the edge of the road).



## No-Parking Zones

Parking is not allowed:

- On sidewalks.
- On the street side of any parked vehicle. (This is known as “double parking.”)
- In intersections.
- Within 50 feet of railroad tracks.
- On bridges or overpasses.
- In front of a driveway.
- Within 15 feet of a fire hydrant.
- Within 20 feet of a crosswalk.
- Within 30 feet of a stop sign, yield sign, or traffic signal.
- Within 20 feet of a fire station driveway.
- On any controlled-access highway (freeway).
- Where prohibited by signs or a red, yellow, or white “no parking” curb.

## Handicapped Parking

The symbol shown here indicates parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons. Vehicles displaying this symbol on their license plate or a special card may park in handicapped spaces. Non-handicapped drivers are prohibited from parking in such spaces and may be fined for violations. A handicapped person may park automobiles displaying the handicapped symbol in public parking spaces without paying and for unlimited time.



## Using Your Turn Signals

Always give a turn signal when you:

- Change lanes or pass another vehicle.
- Turn at an intersection or into a driveway.
- Enter or leave a freeway or interstate highway.
- Pull away from a parked position along a road or street to enter the traffic lane.
- Pull over to the side of the road.

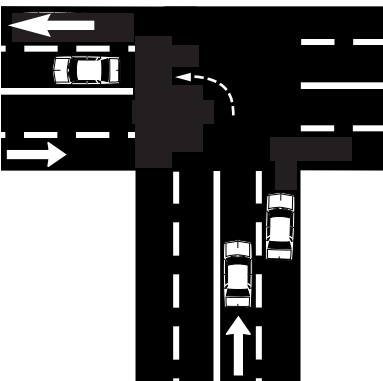
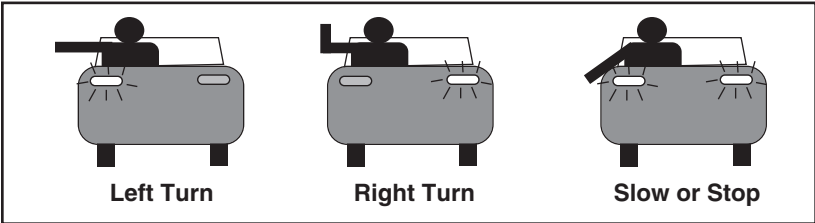
Proper signalling may prevent a rear-end collision. Signals must start at least 100 feet (in business or residential areas) or five seconds (on freeways or highways) before you turn or change lanes. If you plan to turn just beyond an intersection, signal just after you pass through the intersection so you won't confuse other drivers. You may use either electric turn signals or arm signals.



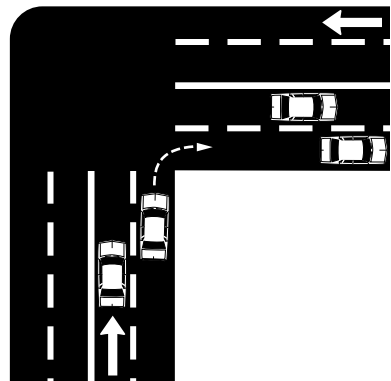
The correct arm signals are:

- **Left:** Your arm and hand extended straight out the window.
- **Right:** Your arm and hand extended upward out the window.
- **Stop:** Your arm and hand extended downward out the window (see illustration below).

You must signal before every turn or lane change.



Left turns.



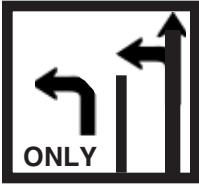
Right turns.

## Turns

The diagrams above illustrate the proper lanes for starting and ending a turn unless an intersection is marked otherwise.

- **Right Turns:** Give your signal and approach the intersection in the right-hand lane, staying as close to the right curb as is reasonable. Yield the right of way to pedestrians and vehicles that have the right of way. Watch for bicycles between your vehicle and the curb or that are inappropriately approaching from the right. Then turn into the right-hand lane of the cross street. Do not swing wide.

- **Left Turns:** Give your signal and approach the intersection in the lane closest to the left that is open to traffic going your direction. If you are on a two-lane road, you should move to the left side of your lane. Yield the right of way to pedestrians and oncoming vehicles. When safe, turn into the nearest lane in which traffic moves the direction you want to go. Do not cut the corner.



**Vehicles in the left lane must turn left. Vehicles in the right lane may turn left or continue straight ahead. Vehicles turning left must remain in their lane of travel until after completing the turn.**

- **Turning At a Red Light:** At a steady red light, you may turn right after stopping and yielding to cross traffic—unless otherwise posted. When turning left into a one-way street, you may proceed from a steady red light after stopping and yielding for cross traffic—unless otherwise posted.
- **U-Turns:** U-turns are not legal everywhere, so first look for prohibiting signs. When making a U-turn near a hill or curve, the law requires that you be able to see 500 feet in either direction. U-turns are prohibited in no-passing zones. Stop and yield to all traffic before completing a U-turn.

## Open Range



Horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and other livestock under controlled movement over a highway or road have the right of way in Idaho. When you meet or overtake any livestock herds, be careful and cooperate with the workers in charge.



Livestock also run at large in much of Idaho's range country, and they have the right of way. Drivers must be alert for animals grazing unattended on "open range," which means almost all areas outside of city limits and herd districts upon which livestock by custom, license, lease, or permit, are grazed or permitted to roam. The presence of fences does not necessarily mean that animals are not present or do not have the right of way. Be especially careful driving at night. If you strike and injure or kill

livestock or domestic animals that are on the open range or under controlled movement, the owner of the animal(s) is not liable for damages

to you or your vehicle. You may be liable for the injuries or death of the animal if you are found to have been negligent.

### **OPEN CONTAINER LAW**

It is against the law for any person in a motor vehicle on a public roadway to drink alcoholic beverages, or to transport open (unsealed) containers of alcoholic beverages. It is a misdemeanor for a driver in actual physical control of a vehicle to violate the open container law—it is an infraction for passengers.

An unsealed alcoholic beverage container may be legally transported in the enclosed trunk compartment or behind the last upright seat of a vehicle without a trunk compartment.

Passengers may drink and possess alcoholic beverages in the passenger area of a vehicle designed, maintained, or primarily used to “transport people for compensation,” or in the living quarters of a recreational vehicle.

### **Other Laws You Need to Know**

- **Lights:** Headlamps and taillamps must be lighted from sunset to sunrise and when poor visibility makes them necessary for safety. Headlamps must be dimmed 500 feet before meeting and 200 feet before overtaking another vehicle. When lights are needed for driving, use headlamps, not parking lights.
- **Median Strip:** It’s illegal to drive across a barrier or unpaved strip that separates two halves of a roadway except at an authorized opening or crossover. This is not allowed on Interstate highways (freeways)—crossovers are for emergency vehicles only.
- **Racing:** It’s illegal to engage in any vehicle race, speed exhibition, or speed contest on any public road, street, or highway.
- **Driving on Sidewalks:** Driving on sidewalks is prohibited except to cross into or out of a driveway or alley.
- **Keep Windows and Windshield Clear:** Windows and windshields must be kept clean of signs, posters, and stickers except those required by law. You must also clean windows of ice, snow, or dirt before driving to ensure that you have maximum visibility in all directions.
- **Backing:** Backing is always prohibited on freeways, expressways, and other controlled-access highways including the shoulder. Elsewhere, backing is prohibited unless it can be done safely and without interfering with other traffic.
- **Obstructing Driver’s View:** It is illegal for passengers or freight to obstruct a driver’s view or interfere with operation of a vehicle.

- **Overhanging Loads:** When a load on a vehicle extends four feet or more beyond the rear of a vehicle, a red flag at least 16 inches square must be displayed at the end of the load. At night, the flag must be replaced by a red light visible for a least 500 feet. The load on a passenger vehicle must not extend outside the fenders on the left side or more than six inches outside the fenders on the right.
- **Reckless Driving:** You must not drive a vehicle with willful disregard for the safety of people or property either on a public road or private property. Violation of this law is known as reckless driving.
- **Inattentive Driving:** While driving, you must give your full attention to the safe operation of your vehicle. Failure to do so may cause you to be cited for inattentive driving.

## Study Questions

1. True or False. Automobiles must yield the right of way to pedestrians crossing in a marked or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection.
2. What must you do before entering a street from an alley, building, driveway, or private road?
3. If you hear an emergency vehicle siren, what action should you take?
4. True or False. When a school bus is unloading passengers on a two-lane highway, cars traveling the opposite direction don't have to stop.
5. True or False. You may legally drive the posted speed limit no matter what the driving conditions.
6. If two vehicles are stopped at right angles at an uncontrolled intersection, which vehicle has the right-of-way?
7. Under what conditions may you pass another vehicle on the right?
8. How many feet before a turn must you signal your intention to turn?
9. Where should you position your vehicle when preparing to make a right turn?
10. Which lane should your vehicle be in after turning left into a two-lane, one-way street?
11. When must headlamps and taillights be lighted?
12. Does an oncoming vehicle have the right of way when you are making a left turn at an uncontrolled intersection?